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## Viewing cable 09CARACAS1543, Sucre Municipality Opposition Mayor Focuses On Barrios

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09CARACAS1543</a>	<a href="#">2009-12-10 15:27</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Caracas</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.semana.com/mundo/wikileaks-venezuela-salio-director-del-canal-globovision/158625-3.aspx>

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RR RUEHAG RUEHAO RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD  
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0125  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CARACAS 001543

SIPDIS  
HQ SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI  
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC  
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SUBJECT: Sucre Municipality Opposition Mayor Focuses On Barrios

REF: CARACAS 1374; CARACAS 1367

CLASSIFIED BY: Robin D. Meyer, Political Counselor, DOS, POL; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Carlos Ocariz, the opposition mayor of the Municipality of Sucre in Greater Caracas, has focused on governing, rather than politicking since assuming office in November 2008. His approval ratings have increased since taking office, and his work on social programs, public services, and participatory budgeting represents a successful effort to challenge Chavismo at its base. Ocariz, the former Secretary General of the opposition party "Primero Justicia," told Poloffs on November 19 that "we need good parliamentary deputies, not good candidates." End Summary. A Microcosm of Venezuela

¶2. (U) Carlos Ocariz succeeded Chavista Jose Vicente Rangel as mayor of the Municipality of Sucre in Greater Caracas in November 2008. Sucre Municipality is one of the five political entities in the Greater District of Caracas. A large municipality, with an estimated population of 1.2 million, Sucre includes middle and upper class commercial areas, urban barrios, including Petare, Caracas' largest, and rural barrios. Ocariz won the municipality by winning 80-90 percent of the middle class votes, and 45 percent of the votes from the poor in the urban barrios.

¶3. (C) Ocariz, Senior Advisor Federico Ortega, and other municipal officials met with Emboffs on November 19. Ortega noted that Sucre's socioeconomic diversity made it representative of Venezuela as a whole. Ocariz said he had focused his administration on improving the quality of life in the barrios. Ortega had earlier noted that "Ocariz goes to Petare almost daily" to inaugurate projects, attend holiday celebrations, and maintain a constant presence in poor areas. Ocariz said the opposition-oriented TV station Globovision has criticized him for focusing too much on the poor areas to the neglect of wealthier parts of Sucre.

#### Focus on Governance

¶4. (C) Sucre officials told Poloffs that it was initially easy to improve on the previous administration's activities. The municipality has benefited from its unusual ability to raise money through taxes. The municipality has been helped by an unexpected uptick in municipal tax receipts from companies and organizations that resisted paying their taxes in full to the previous Chavista administration. "Our tax income has gone from 650 million Bolivares Fuerte (about 300 million USD at the official exchange rate) in 2008 to 1.2 billion BsF (558 million USD) in 2009," said Ortega. While passing projects through the Chavista-dominated Municipal Council has been difficult, they have partnered with private organizations to raise money for specific projects. His administration has also made efforts to reach out to all members of the community and has set up a hotline for the local Consejo Comunal members. Ocariz has focused on basic public services such as police, water availability, trash collection, and access to health care.

Crime: Ocariz said the homicide rate has declined by 25 percent over the past year, which they attribute in part to increased police salaries and training. Sucre municipality official Angel Alvarado believes that increased accountability is also an important reason for the improvements, noting to Poloff that daily reports are now due from police leaders to the Mayor's office. "We can reduce it some more," Ortega said, "but there are city and nation-wide problems that we cannot address alone."

Water: In an unusual arrangement, Sucre municipality is responsible for distribution of water, while the national government institution, Hidrocapital, is responsible for supplying water. The basic infrastructure of pipes and pumps had been neglected for years when Ocariz took office and could not pump water to the poor areas in communities on the hills. Ocariz improved the infrastructure and now more areas have access to running water. (Note: Hidrocapital has now announced water shortages city-wide due to supply problems described in Ref B. End

Note.)

Health: Ocariz's office is working to improve access to and quality of health care in the municipality. Part of the municipality's social program, the "Plan Progresar," is to promote prenatal care through a cash incentive program. Sucre is one of the few municipalities to own and operate a hospital; Ocariz said they recently renovated this hospital, which happens to be next to a partially closed central government hospital. "Ours is working," Ocariz said, "while theirs is in crisis." Chavez's flagship program of "Barrio Adentro," had lost credibility in the municipality due to a lack of doctors and medicine. In spite of Chavez's public refocus on the program in September and October (Ref A), Ortega said he had not seen an increase in activities or funding for "Barrio Adentro" in Sucre municipality.

#### Abandoned Central Government Projects

15. (C) Poloffs had previously visited the Petare barrio of Sucre on July 15. During that visit, community leaders had stressed the failure of central government programs in Sucre as a result of mismanagement or corruption. One Sucre community leader showed Poloffs an abandoned factory on the outskirts of Petare that had been stripped of cement blocks, steel rods, and wire fencing. One of the tall public housing buildings nearby had been abandoned because the river had started encroaching on its foundation. The twenty new homes built a few years ago as the start of an uncompleted plan for 400 homes still lacked access to public services such as electricity, water, paved roads, and public transportation.

#### Chavez is "Far From the People"

16. (C) Ocariz told Poloffs that Chavez's focus on Colombia, Honduras, and other international issues was evidence that he was losing touch with the daily concerns of many Venezuelans. "He used to be close to the people," Ocariz said, "but he now he is far." Ocariz said he has heard private dissent even from some of the Chavista members of the Municipal Council. In focus groups run by Sucre official Alvarado this past July, young men from Petare expressed practical concerns about jobs and security. One participant asked why Chavez was "flying all around the world while things in Caracas are so bad." A local community leader in Petare told Poloff that people were interested in concrete things like paved roads, electricity, and water "so we can turn our ranchitos into houses." In his family's one-room home with dirt floors and unfinished walls, he had a DVD player and cable television but no electricity to run them. Ocariz staff said his approval ratings have increased in the urban barrios; the rural barrios, however, are still strongly pro-Chavez.

#### 2010 Elections

17. (C) Ocariz told Poloffs that there were many potential candidates from Sucre interested in running for office in the 2010 National Assembly elections. He said part of the difficulty in selecting candidates was because the National Electoral Council (CNE) had not yet announced the new district boundaries. Ocariz said "we need good members of parliament," as well as candidates who can win. He thought the opposition had a good chance of winning many National Assembly seats, although he acknowledged that fraud or outright cancellation of elections was possible. Ocariz said he had distanced himself from the "Primero Justicia" party to focus on governance and had little public involvement with the opposition's preparations for the 2010 elections. As for his own political future, Ocariz said his focus was on his reelection as Sucre Mayor in 2012.

#### Bio Note on Carlos Ocariz

18. (C) Carlos Eduardo Ocariz Guerra was elected mayor of the Sucre Municipality of Caracas in November 2008, defeating then Information Minister and close Chavez advisor Jessie Chacon. Previously, Ocariz worked in the Miranda State Governor's office, where he founded the Foundation for the Social Development of Miranda State. He narrowly lost to Jose Vicente Rangel in the 2004 Sucre election. From 2000 to 2005 he was a representative of Miranda State in the National Assembly. He worked briefly at the

Inter-American Development Bank in Washington, DC before returning to Venezuela in 1995. A founding member of the "Primero Justicia" political party, he resigned his position as Secretary General after winning the Sucre mayorship. He has hired many young and politically-independent staff members to work in Sucre, and the office regularly uses polling data in its strategic development. Born on May 1, 1971, Ocariz graduated with a civil engineering degree from Caracas' Metropolitan University in 1994 and studied public policy in Montreal, Canada in 1995. He is married to Mariana Gimenez Soucy and has two young children.

Comment

19. (C) Ocariz's focus on improving public services in the municipality's poor areas is both good government and good politics. Sucre's ability to raise taxes, unusual in many municipalities with less commercial activity, reduces its dependency on the central government for funding and expands the options available to an opposition leader. The reports of abandoned and wasted central government efforts, breakdowns in basic services, and resentment of Chavez's focus on external affairs may explain his falling poll numbers in areas that have strongly supported him in the past.

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